PERSPECTIVES OF THE ORGANIC FARMING IN ROMANIA

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SUMMARY

The development of ecological agriculture in Romania is based on the EU regulations and on Romanian ecological laws, provisions also existing in the National Program for Acquis Communautaire, as well as projects for the adopting of ecological production methods and the preservation of rural landscape. Romania is making an effort to harmonise agricultural and agro-environmental policies with the rest of the European Union: the National Plan for Agriculture and Rural Development was presented by Romania in October 2000. Considering the demand of organic products from the foreign markets and the prices paid for these products, organic farming can represent an important source of money for Romanian farmers. The institutional framework must stimulate and sustain the Romanian agricultural producers in developing this type of agriculture.

Organic agriculture began to proliferate in Europe in 1980s and continued during the 1990s, when it was common in many countries to see that the growth in organic production exceeded 20% per year. Today, Europe is one of the most active organic producing regions in the world, with over 5.5 million hectares of land farmed organically, representing approximately 20% of all farmland worldwide. Slightly over 3% (140,000) of all European farms are organic.

As a percentage of total farmland in 2004, Austria was highest, with 11.6% of its total agriculture area devoted to organic production, followed by Switzerland (10.0%), Italy (8.0%), Finland (7.0%), Denmark (6.6%) and Sweden (6.1%). Belgium has 1.5%. In these countries have well-developed organic markets as well.

Almost 50% of organic products, produced globally are sold in Europe.

Romanian laws and regulations have to comply with the international conventions signed by Romania and European regulation; despite the existing legislation, new laws are needed to adjust to new developments in the agriculture sector. Concerning the organic farming in Romania there are many strengths: the increase of the cultivated surfaces according to the rules of the biological agriculture from 17 000 ha in the year 2000 up to 75 000 ha in 2004, the recording of an increasing number of producers in ecological agriculture (129 companies and natural persons out of which: 65 in vegetal production, 19 in the animal production, 41 beekeepers and one importer), more than 1700 household were controlled, that owned 2575 milk cows and a quantity of 50000 hl. of milk was certified, the existence of
ecological farms of great dimensions in vegetal production (the largest –1500 ha) and animal production (5000 sheep for milk), Circa 35 % of the soils have good and very good fertility, being suitable for a relatively wide range of culture, the fertility and biological activity of soils are maintained solely by products derived from animal farms, diseases, pests and weeds are mostly controlled by means of selecting tolerant or resistant varieties, providing an adequate crop rotation, by physical and mechanical means of control, an opening towards varieties and hybrids created in EU countries, the fodders for the animals are mostly obtained form natural grasslands on which no fertilizers or other synthesis products were used, the existence of varieties and hybrids created in Romania, adapted to the specific conditions, wide biodiversity, specific for pedo-climatic areas.

In the mean time exists many opportunities for the organic farming in Romania as: carrying out some programs with European financing, which aim at developing the rural areas: SAPARD (158,7 million EUR), ISPA (343 million EUR) and PHARE – 405,3 million EUR (2004), projects of rural development financed by the World Bank, subsidies of the Romanian Fund of Development which have as objectives the rural infrastructure, activities generating revenues in the rural environment as well as the social services, the increase of the number of trade companies that work the land through leasing or concession, facilities granted to stimulate the association of farmers that obtain bio products (The Association of Romanian Bio farmers – Bioterra), the issuing of the “Legislative guide for ecological agriculture” meant at helping producers and those interested in bio agriculture, the dissemination of the concept of bio agriculture, of the legislative connections and of the technologic exigencies for each product, organizing courses for qualification for farmers according to the EU legislation in the domain of biological production, at the Universities of Agricultural Sciences, creating the National Authority of Ecological Products in view of securing the observance of the specific legal provisions and the control regarding ecological production.

Considering the demand of organic products from the foreign markets and the prices paid for these products, organic farming can represent an important source of money for Romanian farmers.

The implementation of organic farming practices has still to be achieved (strict control of “organic” and labelling), and economic incentives for organic farming do not exist.

The agricultural extension service (Consultanta agricola) should promote on a large scale correct organic farming practices.

The appreciation of organic food by Romanian consumers is low. In fact, Romanian farmers practice organic farming due to a lack of funds for agrochemicals, but their products are sold on the local markets at a lower price than in store. Great hope is put on external western European markets, but such markets are quite few.

The institutional framework must stimulate and sustain the Romanian agricultural producers in developing this type of agriculture, because there is an important external demand and, in addition, through Romanian consumers “education (which have the tendency “natural products” for the following reasons:
- they are aware of the importance of food safety and quality;
- they imitate the consumers behaviour from EU member countries

In order to reach the objectives of organic farming in Romania, the following measures must be taken:

-legal measures: MAFF staff working in this field has in view legal harmonisation completion this year. Hence, the legislation that has been elaborated so far must be completed
and a legal document should be issued that establishes the accrediting conditions for the inspection and certification bodies);

- **institutional measures** imply the establishment of a departmental structure. The inspection and certification bodies in Romania will be accredited by the authority in charge, MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests) respectively, by the establishment of the “Accrediting Commission of the Inspection and Certification Bodies”;

- **the technical measures** refer to biological agriculture promotion by training operators and inspectors, organising conferences and workshops, editing magazines, elaborating inspection procedures, guidelines, standards.

However, financial support should be given for stimulating organic farming initiation. This presentation represents an argument in the favour of the necessity to promote organic farming practice on large scale in Romania.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**